



Acting State Health Officer Emphasizes Communication

Dr. Scott Harris is honored to be Alabama's Acting State Health Officer because of the opportunity this position presents to make a difference in a broad way. Working at the Central Office the past six months has given him a new perspective, and he has enjoyed getting to know more members of the dedicated department staff.

The Talladega native is a 1987 graduate of Harding University in Searcy, Ark., with a B.S. degree in biochemistry and a 1991 graduate of the University of Alabama School of Medicine. He served his residency and internship at Carraway Methodist Medical Center before returning to UAB for an infectious disease fellowship.

He worked at the 1917 Clinic and the VA Hospital HIV Clinic at a time when there were only a couple of antiretroviral drugs available to treat his patients, largely gay men who had returned to Alabama from other parts of the country. A credentialed HIV Specialist, American Academy of HIV Medicine, his early experiences working directly with HIV patients helped him gain an appreciation that social factors and disparities have a tremendous effect on our population's health.

"Even though I always wanted to practice medicine, my naïve view was that illness and injury were just random occurrences instead of manifestations of the culture in which a person lives. I understand how diseases don't affect all equally. Fundamentally, race, socioeconomic status, education, sex, sexual orientation and environment play a very big role in determining health consequences."

In 1996, Dr. Harris moved to Decatur where he practiced infectious disease medicine at Parkway Medical Center and Decatur General Hospital. He served on the Medical Executive Committee, was medicine department chairman and director of multiple committees including infection control, pharmacy and therapeutics, and worked with a surgical care improvement project. He is past chairman and

current member of the Decatur Morgan Hospital Foundation.

Another important step in his professional development was helping to found the Decatur-Morgan Community Free Clinic. He served as the volunteer medical director for 11 years and remains a member of its board. The clinic offers health care and dental care to low income, medically uninsured local residents at no charge.



Scott Harris, M.D.

In 2005, Dr. Harris received certification by the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene with a Certificate of Knowledge, Clinical Tropical Medicine and Travelers' Health and received certification by the International Society of Travel Medicine. He has participated in more than a dozen international medical missions to Latin America and the Caribbean.

Among his other impressive qualifications, he is a fellow of the American College of Physicians (FACP) and the Infectious Disease Society of America (FIDSA). In 2015, he joined the department as area health officer for the seven counties of Public Health Area 2, and is enrolled in the Masters in Public Health degree program at UAB School of Public Health with a concentration in health policy.

The State Committee of Public Health appointed him to his current position in June upon the announcement of former State Health Officer Dr. Tom Miller's retirement. As he leads the department on an acting basis, a particular challenge that department employees are facing is the conversion to the electronic health record, and the need to minimize its impact on employees in the clinical setting.

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While the transition to the new system will not save work time, Dr. Harris explained, its features of storage, retrieval, and access will improve effectiveness. He knows that is true because from his own experience using an electronic medical record in his private practice. There will be added requirements to spend money to support hardware and software. While the use of employee time will be altered, he is confident our employees are up to this challenge of modernization.

Dr. Harris does not view his management style as autocratic; rather he manages by soliciting input and ideas and building coalitions from top to bottom. One important message he would like to convey to public health employees is the need to establish open communication with coworkers and avoid tunnel vision that can leave employees blindsided.

“I can’t overemphasize the importance of communication to our employees because it helps create trust,” Dr. Harris said. “Good communication not only creates a nicer workplace, it makes for a more efficient organization. By including others’ input, we aren’t making decisions in a vacuum. I want people to consider the effects of decisions they make on the people within the agency as well as external stakeholders.”

The political process in state government is an area he is learning, and he wants to be responsive to elected officials’ needs and those of the constituents they serve while supporting public health and our workforce.

“These are challenging fiscal times,” Dr. Harris said. “When we make our budget request, we want those who fund us to understand that our hardworking employees deserve to be compensated fairly and our programs supported. There are real difficult decisions to be made about staffing and resources, and alternative funding streams through grants can be important.”

So much work needs to be done and he would like to make inroads into a multitude of areas, such as improving nutrition and increasing physical activity. Unhealthy lifestyles lead to chronic conditions such as heart and kidney disease that are huge problems for Alabama. The high infant mortality rate in the state also goes back to social determinants that influence health.

“Infant mortality is almost predictable when you look at educational attainment and the income level of the family,” he said. “It shouldn’t be that way, and it is unfortunate that we haven’t been able to impact infant deaths more.”

Another area in which public health has become increasingly involved is addressing the opioid epidemic that results in the deaths of almost 100 people daily nationally and has surpassed vehicle accidents as a cause of death. There are no simple solutions to this mammoth problem that affects direct medical care, law enforcement, the prison system and many other areas of our society. Like infant mortality, ultimately much of the damage results from social determinants.

Born and raised in Talladega, his mother Mary Catherine Harris was a public health nurse and his father was a pharmacist. He and his wife Sandy (Petrie) Harris are the parents of four adults. Hobbies he lists on his curriculum vitae are reading, cooking, biking and traveling.

As has often been said, when you don’t have your health, nothing else matters. Working in an area as fundamental as public health is an honor and privilege Dr. Harris takes seriously, and he values the trust that has been placed in him to serve the people of Alabama to further the department’s mission of promoting, protecting, and improving the health of individuals and communities in Alabama.

Alabama Department of Public Health

Mission
To promote, protect, and improve the health of individuals and communities in Alabama.

Vision Statement
The Alabama Department of Public Health will lead the state in assuring the health of Alabamians by promoting healthy, safe, prepared, and informed communities.

Value Statement
The Alabama Department of Public Health believes that all people have a right to be healthy. Our core values are the provision of high-quality services, a competent and professional workforce, and delivering compassionate care.

Alabama’s Health

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|-----------------------------------|--|
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Tuscaloosa County WIC Program Receives State's First Loving Support Gold Award

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), has awarded the Tuscaloosa County Health Department the Loving Support Award of Excellence Gold Award.

"This is the first time that Alabama WIC has ever received a Loving Support Award," WIC director Amanda Martin said. "Congratulations to Renee Cole and her staff." Two-thirds of Alabama mothers (67.6 percent) now initiate breastfeeding their infants, a marked improvement from previous surveys.

The award program was established to recognize local WIC agencies that have provided exemplary breastfeeding promotion and support activities. The intent of the award is to provide models and motivate other local agencies to strengthen their breastfeeding promotion and support activities and ultimately increase breastfeeding initiation and duration rates among WIC participants. To be eligible for the award, local WIC agencies must have operated a peer-counseling program that meets all of the required core components.

Tuscaloosa County currently employs two breastfeeding peer counselors who receive referrals from WIC nutritionists. Participants and peer counselors speak throughout pregnancy, and that interaction allows them to develop relationships with each other.

Tuscaloosa County has recently reestablished a breastfeeding support group that Ms. Cole believes is a very positive development. Ten women attended the second meeting along with peer counselors. "This helps mothers put a face with the name and helps the patient to know that they can easily talk with someone who can help them through the tough times. The peer counselors debunk myths and answer questions from the participants."

Sandra Benton-Davis, branch chief of the Supplemental Nutrition Program, Food and Nutrition Service, Southeast Region, stated, "WIC local agencies continue to play a critical role in promoting, encouraging and supporting breastfeeding! We appreciate the commitment to making breastfeeding promotion and support a priority as well as ensuring the core component of the nutrition services that the WIC Program provides to meet its mission of safeguarding the health of low-income women, infants and children."

Ms. Cole said receiving this award has been "a real morale booster" for the dedicated WIC staff.



WIC staff in Tuscaloosa County are pictured, left to right, Jamie Albright, peer counselor; LeeAnn Wagner; Renee Cole, nutrition director; Mary Montgomery; Sandy Wilson, peer counselor coordinator; Sailaja Reddy and Candace Pimentel, peer counselor.

Every Blank Matters! Campaign Emphasizes Timely and Accurate Compliance in Reporting HIV Counseling and Testing Data

Every Blank Matters! (EBM) is a new information campaign to promote statewide compliance of HIV/AIDS counseling and testing data. The EBM campaign motto is, “Your Data.Your Story.”

The campaign was created by the Division of HIV Prevention and Care and launched on December 16, 2016.

The EBM campaign goal is to ensure that HIV/AIDS providers and health departments statewide receive ongoing education regarding the importance of reporting counseling and testing data timely to the division. Most importantly, the campaign wants to strive for 100 percent compliance with data quality assurance reporting standards for HIV testing data as determined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This compliance measure ensures the state of Alabama receives adequate funding for statewide HIV/AIDS services.

Expectations of the EBM campaign are to measure improvements from collaborative partners and health departments on data compliance to the department’s HIV/AIDS Disease Information System (HADIS).

In an effort to collect timely and accurate data, the HIV/AIDS Data Branch is implementing the following quality improvements:

- Establishing additional required fields for data reporting within the HADIS
- Establishing additional required variables to ensure accurate data submission within the HADIS
- Establishing monthly monitoring of data submission
- Establishing monthly data compliance reports for collaborative providers
- Establishing monthly follow-up of collaborative partners not in compliance
- Providing statewide CDC and ADPH data quality aggregate reports
- Providing individual/agency training for collaborative providers

“If you are responsible for completing an HIV serology form in the provision of client services, we are asking

for your help to ensure each data submission tells the true story about the epidemic within the state,” Sharon Jordan, division director, said. “Your role is key in data collection and reporting.”

Incomplete data reporting results in reduced federal funding to states.

“Each client encounter begins the story,” Donna Jordan of the HIV Data Branch said. “The story of each data submission from collaborative partners and health departments is compelling because it provides a narrative of how HIV/AIDS is affecting so many lives throughout the state of Alabama. Ask yourself this question--Will your agency become a data quality improvement champion in the **Every Blank Matters! Campaign?**”

The mission of the Division of HIV Prevention and Care, in collaboration with community partners, is to reduce the incidence of HIV infections, to increase life expectancy for those infected, and to improve the quality of life for persons living with or affected by HIV. The division motto is as follows:

Know Your Status.

Manage Your Health.

Live Your Best Life. - Alabama

(Please download the **KML AL** application free from the app store).

The charge of the division is to:

- Monitor the epidemic
- Improve public understanding of HIV
- Prevent or reduce behaviors that transmit HIV
- Increase individual knowledge of HIV serostatus
- Strengthen systems for referral to appropriate prevention and treatment services

For more information about the **Every Blank Matters! Campaign**, please visit alabamapublichealth.gov/hiv.

By DONNA JORDAN

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PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICTS

Effective October 1, 2017



Telehealth Helps Patients Overcome Barriers to Health Care

Access to health care is the leading concern of Alabama rural citizens, and a survey of rural health providers showed that appointments were often not kept due to lack of transportation. This major barrier to health care was also identified in community health assessments conducted throughout the state. Through telehealth, medically underserved Alabamians, especially in rural communities, can access specialty care right down the street rather than traveling long distances.

The department began pursuing telehealth in 2014, using its technical expertise with video production, distance learning, and video conferencing for the public health workforce. In 2015, the department initiated the Public Health Telehealth Network.

Telehealth can increase access to preventive and specialty care, address health disparities, and save money. Transportation costs are not only reduced, efficiency is increased due to shared health professional staffing through telehealth.

The need is great. Fifty-four of the 67 Alabama counties are considered rural, and there is a large population of medically underserved residents. Alabama's health professionals are unevenly distributed throughout the state. While about 75 percent of health care providers are located in Jefferson County, only about 25 percent of the state lives there.

"Telehealth is a perfect opportunity to bring specialty care into a community while saving time and travel expense," Michael Smith, director of the Distance Learning and Telehealth Division, said. Public health departments are an especially desirable site for patients because they offer a neutral point of entry for all healthcare services, are available to the public statewide, and have clinical and technical staff available.

The Public Health Telehealth Network presently facilitates telehealth encounters/appointments for the following conditions: HIV/AIDS, mental health counseling, sexually transmitted disease interviews with clients, routine nephrology appointments for home dialysis patients, and nephrology consultations. The network currently has six active partners: AIDS Alabama, the STD Division of the Bureau of Communicable Disease, the University of Alabama at Birmingham Medical Center, the University of South

Alabama School of Medicine, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. In addition, the number of telehealth collaborating partners as well as the services soon to be offered are growing rapidly.

Telehealth encounters are encrypted and HIPAA compliant. Each ADPH custom cart includes a computer, an HD (high definition) pan, tilt and zoom video camera and codec, two 24-inch monitors, a 3M Bluetooth stethoscope, and a JedMed handheld examination camera with three lenses.

"A telehealth program requires agency commitment and staff participation from throughout the organization -- a teamwork approach to make it successful, and ADPH staff have embraced the new technology and it is slowly becoming part of our culture as the technology is incorporated into our daily work activities," Smith explained.

Sixty county health departments now have the required bandwidth capacity for telehealth. "And while we presently have 23 county health departments with telehealth carts," Smith continued, "we are in the process of deploying an additional 30 carts over the next few months."

The lack of reimbursement for telehealth services in Alabama is a financial barrier for healthcare providers. Alabama has no parity coverage laws that would require reimbursement by health plans for telehealth services at the same rate as those paid for in-person visits. Adopting parity legislation in Alabama would incentivize health care professionals to use telehealth.

However, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama recently adopted reimbursement for telehealth services for



Alabama Public Radio Producer AuBuchon, left, interviews Carolyn Bern, Dr. Jessica Hardy and Michael Smith for a rural health series highlighting telehealth.

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Teamwork

What is teamwork?

Teamwork is the process of working collaboratively with a group of people in order to achieve a goal as well as getting along with others.

Getting Along With Others

Dealing effectively with colleagues, bosses, employees and the public is important in any job.

Employees who get along with others at work tend to have a strong desire to be liked and well thought of by their coworkers, take pride in their work, and are driven to succeed and get ahead.

Strategies for Getting Along with Coworkers:

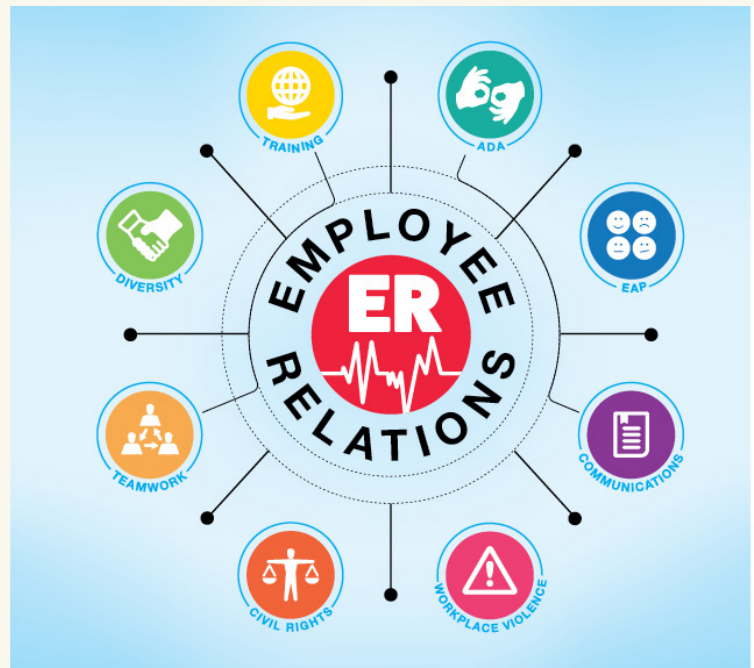
Be polite, courteous and welcome new or transferring employees to your office.

- Be helpful to others.
- Give people as much genuine praise as possible and keep criticism to a minimum.
- Compliment a person's effort and hard work.
- Avoid saying negative things that start with "You always" or "You never."
- Avoid gossip.
- Look for opportunities to compliment and congratulate someone.
- When someone is upset, give them time to vent. Listen with an open mind.

- Do not use profanity, condemn or belittle another person or his ideas.
- If you disagree with someone's position, do so in a respectful way.
- Show appreciation when others have helped you, share credit with others, and give credit where it is due.

If employees have any questions, you may contact Danita Rose, Employee Relations Officer in the Office of Human Resources, at (334) 206-9494.

By Danita Rose



Childhood Cancer Awareness Promoted

Employees in the RSA Tower showed their support for children battling cancer by wearing gold on September 29 in observance of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. Also shown is Raeleigh Jane McCartha, daughter of Rachel and Josh McCartha, who was diagnosed with neuroblastoma, a rare and serious form of childhood cancer.



Retirees

The following departmental employees have retired recently:

June

Glenda Blackwood
Blount County Health
Department
Carol Cofield
Chambers County Health
Department
Melissa Hornsby
Information Technology
Sheila Murray
Public Health Area 2
Brenda Robbins
Colbert County Health
Department
Joy Rollins
Randolph County Health
Department
David Rozear
Information Technology
Daniel St. Onge
Public Health Area 11
Deborah Stowe
Cherokee County Health
Department
Kim Woods
Public Health Area 2 TB

July

Gloria Branch
Madison County Health
Department
Ann McClendon
Shelby County Health
Department
Stella Patton
Butler County Health
Department
Donna Rhone
Public Health Area 7
Cindy Seawright
St. Clair County Health
Department
Sylvia Wood
Blount County Health
Department

August

Rhonda Boyles
Colbert County Health
Department
Diane Lollar
Public Health Area 1
Tarrie Rodgers
Coffee County Health
Department
Alana Salter
Baldwin County Health
Department
Tracy Schofield
Tuscaloosa County
Health Department
Debra Taylor
Public Health Area 2

September

Varhonda Dunagan
Walker County Health
Department
Lana Grantham
Tuscaloosa County
Health Department
Angela James
Immunization
Jacqueline Mobley
Health Care Facilities
Audra Wilson
Conecuh County Health
Department

October

Kathy Davis
Marengo County Health
Department
David Legett
Public Health Area 9
Immunization
Malaika Paige
Tuscaloosa County
Health Department
Kathryn Whiting
Public Health Area 9
Immunization
Carol Williams
Health Care Facilities



Coworkers honored Vivian Dabney for her 40 years of service with a reception at the Montgomery County Health Department on July 27. She is shown with State Health Officer Dr. Tom Miller.



David Walter, director of the Office of Radiation Control, presents a certificate to Janette Moss upon her retirement with 25 years of service.



The Bureau of Health Provider Standards, the Office of Emergency Medical Services and the Office of Radiation Control held a retirement celebration honoring Dr. Walter T. Geary, Jr., M.D., Assistant State Health Officer for Regulatory Affairs, on September 18. Dr. Geary, left, is shown with his wife Lauren and Acting State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris.

State Health Officer Dr. Tom Miller Retires

State Health Officer Dr. Thomas M. Miller retired effective September 1, concluding nearly 28 years of service. A significant achievement during his tenure as State Health Officer is that the Public Health Accreditation Board awarded the department was awarded national accreditation for five years, making Alabama one of 26 state health departments that have achieved this milestone accomplishment.

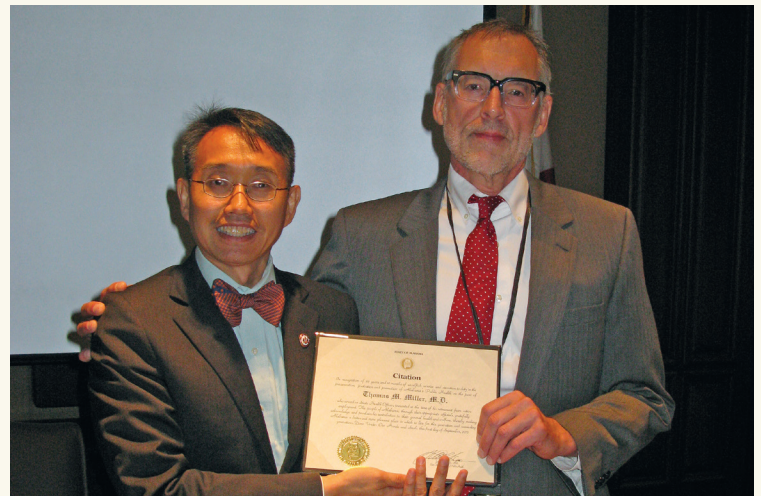
As he moves on to the next chapter of his life, Dr. Miller said he treasured his coworkers and team at the county, area and state levels for their guidance and support and noted his appreciation for his predecessors. In his final staff meeting by satellite on August 24, Acting State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris thanked Dr. Miller for his leadership and commitment to public health.

In recognition of his service, Senior Policy Advisor Dave White presented Dr. Miller a commendation on behalf of Governor Kay Ivey that acknowledged Dr. Miller's work in areas that have made a significant impact on many aspects of public health. Noted were his efforts "to provide access to health programs and services regardless of social circumstances or the ability to pay; implementing strategies to reduce infant mortality and decrease health disparities; educating the public on healthier living and avoiding preventable diseases and harm from injury; and working to reduce the use of tobacco."

During his career in the department, Dr. Miller served in various leadership positions including Area Health Officer, director and Assistant State Health Officer for the bureaus of Family Health Services, Health Promotion and Chronic Disease, and Clinical Laboratories; Chief Medical Officer; and Acting State Health Officer before his appointment as State Health Officer in March 2016.

Dr. Miller has been a fellow of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists since 1989 and was a board member of the Alabama Section; a diplomate, American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology; held several positions in the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs; was the March of Dimes National Office of Volunteers, Southern Region Program Representative; served on the Medical Association of the State of Alabama Foundation for Continuing Medical Education, Chairman and Physician Surveyor; and held membership and offices on the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education Committee for Review and Recognition.

His list of honors include induction into the Phi Theta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi and Alpha Omega Alpha honorary societies. He was named March of Dimes State of Alabama Volunteer of the Year in 2002, and in 2015 he was presented the William Henry Sanders Award of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama for outstanding public health work beyond the call of duty.



Dr. Gary Leung, vice chair of the State Committee of Public Health, presents a retirement certificate to State Health Officer Dr. Tom Miller.

Etowah County Holds Open House

Approximately 60 people attended an open house hosted by the Etowah County Health Department on November 6. Shown here welcoming guests, including those from the business community, are Jennifer Weeks and Kelly Clark. District Administrator Mary Gomillion made introductions and other employees, including Wendy Gray and Nancy Tempel, staffed tables and offered health education materials.



Presentation: Algorithm Uses Data to Treat Patients with Hypertension and Diabetes in a Culturally Competent Way

Two speakers from the Alabama Department of Public Health were featured in a seminar series produced by the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Population Health. The August 31 webinar was titled “Evaluating Equity: State and Local Efforts to Eliminate Disparities.”

Angelia Blackmon-Lewis, DNP, director, Health Services Administration, Mobile County Health Department (MCHD), and Debra Hodges, Ph.D., Evaluation Unit Director, Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease, made a presentation about projects that plan for and evaluate the impact of health equity initiatives and demonstrate the power of collective impact.

Titled “Hiding in Plain Sight,” (HIPS) their presentation demonstrated the use of cultural competency and acknowledgement of a diverse population at MCHD through a blood pressure protocol that was utilized to efficiently diagnose hypertension. Hypertension is often undiagnosed, even among patients with health insurance, because of the lack of obvious symptoms, and is often called the “silent killer.” The collection and analysis of electronic health record (EHR) data was an integral component of an intervention.

Alabama’s rate of heart disease and cerebrovascular disease deaths far exceeds the national rates, so getting hypertension and diabetes under control is very important in preventing not just heart disease, but several other chronic conditions. In November 2014, project staff spoke with all MCHD providers about early diagnosis of hypertension by using a blood pressure protocol and describing the

HIPS concept. MCHD has 10 sites and a mobile van providing primary care across the county to more than 41,000 citizens. Staff returned and talked with all providers two months later and collected data on all patients diagnosed with hypertension and/or diabetes for seven months. The data includes approximately 40,000 patient visits.

Alabama was the first state to adopt a blood pressure protocol and algorithm which is customizable according to the doctor’s preferences using JNC7 guidelines and JNC 8 recommendations. This algorithm can be embedded in the EHR or EMR or used manually and will alert the doctor to potential hypertension diagnosis and can set up additional alerts that can signal the following:

- Patients with hypertension that have not been diagnosed and treated.
- “White Coat Syndrome” or stressful situation
- May need to schedule a quick repeat visit
- Use a blood pressure protocol and algorithm to expedite early diagnosis.

Of the 5,550 patients with hypertension, 1,380 were “hiding in plain sight.” Of the patients with diabetes, almost 8 percent were also undiagnosed.

Dr. Hodges said, “We have completed a follow-up study at MCHD to determine the sustainability of this intervention, as well as to assess their success in lowering the blood pressure of the hypertensive population. This study represents how increasing the providers’ awareness of a health issue and embedding a technical tool in an EHR can benefit the population.”

Did you know?

Nine out of 10 people who think they have a penicillin allergy are not truly allergic. Patients can confirm their allergy status and health care providers can perform allergy assessments to help improve antibiotic use and decrease the spread of antibiotic resistance.

Autauga County Observes Breastfeeding Awareness Month

Autauga County WIC Coordinator, Senior Nutritionist, Jennifer Holtzsch, RDN,LD and WIC lab aide, Christine Truesdale help promote Breastfeeding Awareness Month.



Commendations

If you would like to praise employees for their accomplishments, send letters of commendation to the State Health Officer or the employee's supervisor and a copy by e-mail to Arrol.Sheehan@adph.state.al.us for inclusion in this list. Four items are needed: the employee's name, work unit, name of the person making the commendation, and his or her city and state.

Stacey Adams

West Central District

Connie Bailey

Cullman County Health
Department

Bradley Baker

Information Technology

Terry Brown

Information Technology

Novellee DeWitt

Blount County Health
Department

Ricky Elliott

Field Operations

Mary Gomillion

Northeastern District

Chad Kent

Southwestern District

Corey Kirkland

Southeastern District

Ronnie McLendon

Information Technology

Denise Milledge

Health Provider Standards

Judy Smith

Northern District

Sylvia Ware

Chilton County Health
Department

from Mia Sadler
Montgomery, Ala.

Kathie Cleckler

Center for Health
Statistics

from Chris Burrell
Birmingham, Ala.

Chandra Lewis

Financial Services
from Sandra Blakely
Montgomery, Ala.

John Hooper

Center for Emergency
Preparedness
from Robert Berry
Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Annette Johnson-Bell and Record Services

Center for Health
Statistics
from Marva Hayes
Addisleigh Park, N.Y.

Linda Kennedy

Myrtle Mainor

Joanne Thompson

Wellness Division
from Mia Sadler
Montgomery, Ala.

Morgan Parker

Center for Health
Statistics
from J. Hunt
Buffalo, N.Y.

Jennifer Owes

Infectious Diseases
& Outbreaks Division
from Gwen Thomas-LeBlanc,
M.S., C.C.S.
Vernon, Ala.

TB Lab Microbiology Staff

Clinical Laboratories
from Edward Khan, M.D.
Birmingham, Ala.

John Hooper

Tamekie Washington

Center for Emergency
Preparedness
from Kuma Girdner
Montgomery, Ala.



Debra Akhimie of the Office of Radiation Control held a special reception with lots of treats for breast cancer survivors on October 30. She is shown here with survivor Sandra Whatley of the Central Alabama Aging Consortium.

Telehealth, continued from page 6

six conditions: cardiology, dermatology, infectious diseases, behavioral health, nephrology, and neurologic diseases, including stroke. More health conditions are expected to be added in the coming months. The department is working with the UAB Medical Center and other institutions to engage partnerships with providers and health systems as well as to establish a statewide coordinating council.

Telehealth may actually encourage more physicians to locate in rural areas because they can more easily refer their patients to out-of-town specialists who would treat patients remotely at the county health department through telehealth.

For more information, please contact Michael Smith at Michael.smith@adph.state.al.us or Dr. Jessica Hardy at Jessica.hardy@adph.state.al.us.

Department adds LICSWs

Kudos to two social workers who have taken the initiative to become licensed clinical social workers. Both Kimberly Gordon of the Butler County Health Department and William Kennedy, newly appointed State Social Work director, have successfully completed the requirements and can add the designation LICSW after their names.

Heather Smith has recently passed the LICSW, as well. Heather passed the exam in February and is employed in Marion County in the Northern District.

Welcome to Dr. Burnestine Taylor

When she was a child in Atlanta, Ga., the new Medical Officer for Disease Control and Prevention often biked down the pleasant, tree-lined and uncongested streets around the Centers for Disease Control. When she was pedaling around the Clifton Road headquarters near her home, she never imagined she would be affiliated with the public health arena in the future.

Dr. Burnestine Page Taylor came on board in June, bringing with her a background of more than 32 years of experience working in primary care in a variety of clinical settings, including inpatient, outpatient, directorship and emergency medicine. In her many years of practice, she had thought about entering public health, discussed it, and ultimately decided to consider a change that would mean more than just treating individual patients.

"I wanted to broaden the application of my clinical knowledge to affect change for a larger population," Dr. Taylor said. During her full career, her experiences have also included sponsoring medical students and working collaboratively with public health professionals on breast and cervical cancer screening and diabetes.

Her recent transition to public health has involved learning a new "language" of public health and researching different areas such as funding, grants and epidemiology. She has already served as a department spokesperson on local television interviews. In addition, she is preparing herself for the rigors that may come with a serious or novel disease outbreak.

"Our staff is very talented and highly qualified, and they have been very helpful in assisting me with this transition," Dr. Taylor said. Her years of experience are also valuable. "I plan to use my clinical skills to assist me in forming strategies to solve health-related problems for the citizens of Alabama."

Under Acting State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Mary McIntyre, who formerly held her position, Dr. Taylor's first title was Assistant State Health Officer for Disease Control and Prevention and is now Medical Officer for Disease Control and Prevention. She is responsible for the Bureau of Communicable Disease, which consists of the divisions of HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care, Immunization, Infectious Diseases and Outbreaks, STD Control and Tuberculosis Control.

Dr. Taylor holds a B.A. degree in biochemistry from Smith College in Northampton, Mass., and an M.D. degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine. She served an internship in internal medicine at the University of Louisville, Louisville, Ky., and a residency in family practice at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.



Burnestine Taylor, M.D.

Family has been a constant priority in her employment moves. She and her husband, Dr. Norman Taylor, met while they were classmates at UAB. The couple married and moved to San Antonio, later returning to Montgomery to live in an area where they would be near their hometowns and aging parents.

During her residency and after moving to Alabama, Dr. Taylor worked shifts of 24- to 72-hours as an emergency room physician. After maternity leave following the birth of their first child, she accepted a position with better work hours as a staff physician at Lister Hill Health Center. She also worked as a civilian staff physician at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery and West Alabama Health Services in Hayneville. Later, Dr. Taylor was medical director at Central Alabama Comprehensive Health Care in Tuskegee for several years and then served as a staff physician at Cooper Green Urgent Care Center in Birmingham.

Most recently, the mother of four worked as a primary care physician at Central Alabama Veterans Care in Montgomery for the past 16 years where she provided primary care for veterans, largely in the outpatient setting. In her position, education of patients and community members about diet, physical activity, hygiene and disease prevention was among her many roles.

Another personal transition is ahead as her youngest child, a high school senior, will be leaving the nest before long. Dr. Taylor is excited about her professional future as she becomes more heavily involved in the dynamic and ever-changing world of public health.

Hatch Completes HEPP Certificate Program

The University of South Alabama College of Medicine's Center for Disaster Healthcare Preparedness recognized and congratulated Tim Hatch for successfully completing the Healthcare Emergency Preparedness Professional (HEPP) Certificate Program.

This program, funded by federal grants through the ADPH Center for Emergency Preparedness, is the first of its kind in the United States. It is focused on developing standardized emergency preparedness capability within healthcare systems across the state. Hatch's completion of this intensive program has provided him with education which he has brought back to the agency and additionally has provided CEP with participant input into the quality of the program.

Hatch is deputy director for External Activities and director of Logistics and Environmental Programs at the Center for Emergency Preparedness. He voluntarily participated in the 11-month online course from July 2016 through June 2017, completing more than 250 hours of instruction, research and practical application to further his capabilities to prepare and respond to emergencies and all-hazards events within a variety of healthcare settings.

Dr. David L. Wallace, director of Preparedness Training, wrote, "Throughout the course, Mr. Hatch demonstrated dedication and excellence in advancing his knowledge and awareness of emergency preparedness through his participation and thorough completion of 20 course assignments including a practical application project."



Margaret Ezell, Bio-Monitoring nurse with Autauga County Health Department Home Health, retired September 1 after 25 years of service to the State of Alabama with the Department of Public Health. A celebration breakfast was held in her honor August 31. Among those attending were, left to right, Cindy Lawford, Renee Williams, Kara Thomas, Casey Walker, Margaret Ezell, Jackie Giddens and Michelle Baker.

NOVEMBER 2017

Physician Consultant Joins Northern District

Dr. Lynda Gilliam is the new physician consultant with the Bureau of Family Health Services in the Northern District based at the Madison County Health Department. Dr. Gilliam is currently Medical Director of the Obstetrics/Gynecology Hospitalist Program and Obstetrics/Gynecology Emergency Department at Huntsville Hospital and is the incoming Chair of the Alabama Section of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology. She received her medical degree from Medical University of South Carolina College of Medicine and has been in practice for more than 20 years.



Dr. Lynda Gilliam

Distinguished Toastmasters Recognized

Tower Toastmasters club leaders Agnes Oberkor and Vikash Achutaramaiah, left, are pictured here. Each has received the greatest honor that can be earned by a member of the Toastmasters organization, Distinguished Toastmaster. Only a few of the more than 260,000 members of the international organization ever achieve this recognition. To receive this honor, a member must have participated in Toastmasters' Communication and Leadership Program and met other rigorous requirements.



ALABAMA'S HEALTH 13

Stephen Wilson Elected to Interstate EMS Post

Stephen Wilson, interim director of the Office of Emergency Medical Services, was elected inaugural treasurer of the 12-state REPLICA Commission of the Interstate Commission for EMS Personnel Practice. REPLICA stands for the Recognition of EMS Personnel Licensure



Interstate Compact (REPLICA). REPLICA's model legislation creates a formal pathway for the licensed individual to provide pre-hospital care across state lines under authorized circumstances.

Quarterly Star Winner is Sarah Khalidi

Sarah Khalidi, the Alabama state coordinator of the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, was presented the Star Trophy for her achievements during the third quarter of 2017. Jamey Durham, director of the bureaus of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease and Professional and Support Services, recognized her commitment to these programs at a joint staff meeting on October 6.



WIC Vendor Training Class

Jennifer Holtzscher, RDN, LD, and Kathy Ricks, RDN, Senior Nutritionists with the East Central District, held a vendor training class at Autauga County Health Department on September 14. The training centered around the importance of vendor education and understanding of WIC policies and procedures to ensure federal guidelines are followed. Communication and cooperation between the State WIC office, WIC clinics and the stores is imperative to providing services to WIC clients with excellent customer service while following federal guidelines. The vendors were also given information on exciting food package changes coming to WIC starting October 1.



Bake Sale Benefits State Combined Campaign

Members of the Center for Health Statistics staff hosted a bake sale on October 16 to benefit the State Combined Campaign. Pictured alongside some of the goodies are Beverly Enriquez Sosa, Morgan Parker, Agnes McCray and Crystal Arant.



Employees Learn How to Navigate the World of Grant Procurement

Twenty department employees attended a professional grant development workshop at Auburn University August 16-17. The intensive two-day grant proposal workshop was geared towards those who wished to strengthen their grant writing skills, as well as beginners wanting to acquire and master the techniques of preparing and writing winning proposals. The focus was on how to effectively write proposals to various funding agencies in times of keen competition and limited resources.

Instructor for the workshop was Dr. Maria Esformes, and those attending were as follows: Kahlia Bell, Suretta Davis, Tim Feuser, Cherry Davenport, Maegan Ford, Linda Haigler, Chandra Lewis, Melanie Lunsford-Johnson, Sundra Merriweather, Toni Nettles, Teresa Price, Patronya Sanks, Eric Seales, Monica Sewell-Watts, Kimberly Smith, Jabari Sullen, Liz Todd, Sandra Williams, Felicia Williams-Smith and MisChele White.

The Workforce Development Division of the Office of Management Support, Bureau of Professional and Support Services, sponsored the workshop.



Twenty department employees attended grant development training at Auburn University August 16-17.

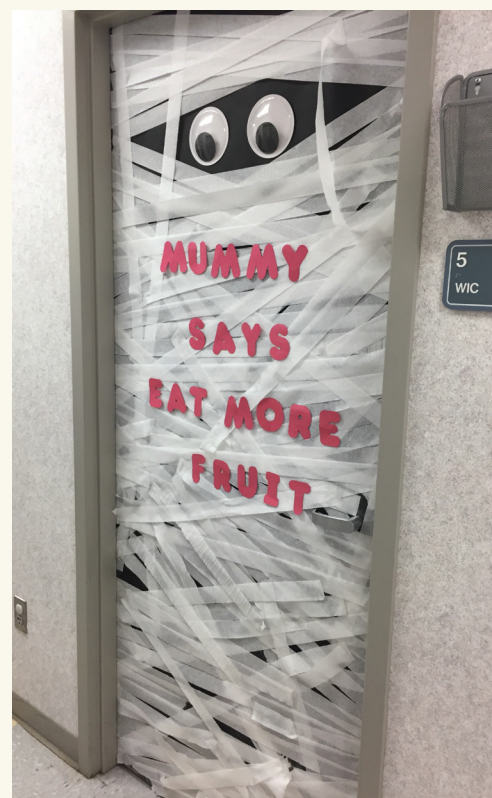
Employees Turn Out for Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Montgomery County Health Department employees wore pink in observance of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and many gathered for this group photo in the department's atrium. Supporters distributed educational materials and honored survivors.



Healthy Halloween Treats

WIC employees in Madison County decorated their office doors with colorful and creative Halloween themes to promote healthy food choices.



Kaizen Event Results in Development of New Contract Process

A quality improvement team of six members along with three Kaizen facilitators rolled out a new ADPH contract process at a report-out event at the RSA Tower in Montgomery on July 24. The new process is needed to lessen the time interval in which contracts go from entry until they are completed in order to meet grant objectives through the mechanism and purpose intended within the grant year.

The systematic, team-based approach meant the team concentrated intensely on the project for five consecutive days to develop a workable plan. It was determined that change is needed to ensure that the \$49 million in grant funds the department has been awarded stay in the department and late penalties are avoided. The new system goes online October 16.

To gain anonymous input from employees, several posters were placed on office walls where employees could post sticky notes with their ideas, complaints and suggestions for solutions on a fishbone diagram.

Kaizen Facilitator Brandi Pouncey e-mailed employees encouraging them to identify issues they have found related to the contract system. In her e-mail, she stated, "These posters are helping our quality improvement team figure out the issues with the contract system and hopefully make it an easier, smoother process for all involved. The only way we can do this is with your help."

"This is a living, breathing process," Team Member Jamey Durham said at the concluding report-out meeting which all interested employees were invited to attend.

Among the many questions raised was how to know when to use a grant, contract, MOU or MOA. The

meeting clarified that many definitions are spelled out in Policy 2016-011—Revised Policy for Contracts and Grants, Advance Payments, deliverables and subrecipients and monitoring.

The team strived to address those issues that affected several bureaus or divisions first. Issues that were not addressed are held on a parking lot to be addressed at a later date.

A major issue that is being addressed by General Counsel with assistance from the Bureau of Financial Services and the Bureau of Professional and Support Services is the non-availability of training. Although training was a known issue, the Kaizen event helped bring out specific topics that need to be touched during the training sessions. Classes began in September and will continue until all ACES users are trained. Ongoing training is being discussed. The new process is set to go live on January 2, 2018.



Kaizen team members shown at the July event, left to right are Carrie Allison, Jamey Durham, Brandi Pouncey, Misty Price, Nancy Wright, Janice Heacock, Denise Bertaut and Arlene Judy.

Calendar of Events

November 27

Opioids, 1-3 p.m.

For more information, contact the Distance Learning and Telehealth Division, (334) 206-5618.



December 7

ADPH Statewide Staff Meeting, 3-4 p.m.

For more information, contact the Distance Learning and Telehealth Division, (334) 206-5618.



March 21

Opioid Epidemic in Alabama

For more information, contact Elena Kidd, (205) 937-7140.



April 4-6, 2018

Navigating the River of Public Health, Alabama Public Health Association 62nd Health Education Conference, Montgomery Marriott Prattville Hotel and Conference Center at Capitol Hill, 2500 Legends Circle, Prattville. Contact Vice President Melanie Dickens, conference chair, (256) 740-1626.

April 25

Narcolepsy Program; 12 noon-1:30 p.m.

For more information, contact Claire Lenker, (205) 638-5496.

